THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COAL AND MINES (DR. DASARI NARAYANA RAO): (a) Coal India Limited (CIL) has earned a gross profit of Rs. 5017.48 crore (provisional, before tax and dividend) in the year 2003-04. However, accounts of CIL are yet to be audited.

(b) and (c) For the X plan period there is a match between the projections of capital outlay and available funds in case of Coal India Limited.

Import of high quality coal

2407. SHRI S.M. LALJAN BASHA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government are importing high quality coal from Australia and other countries;

(b) if so, whether such quality is not available in the country;

(c) whether any effort has been made to improve coal quality in the country;

(d) the exploration efforts going on in this regard;

(e) whether any agreements been signed with foreign companies to intensify the high quality coal exploration efforts; and

(0 the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COAL AND MINES (DR. DASARI NARAYANA RAO): (a) and (b) Government do not import coal. Import of coal has been placed under Open General Licence (OGL) and consumers are free to import coal as per their specific requirements. Some grades of coal of very low ash content are not available in our coal reserves.

(c) Various steps are being taken to improve the quality of available indigenous coal right from the place of mining up to the dispatch point for consumers. Adherence to the envisaged mining sequence/mining layout at the working face, selective mining to separate dirt bands from coal, adoption of measures like picking of shale/stones at the mining faces, installing Coal Handling Plants (CHPs) and dispatch points,

adopting proper blasting technique, washing of coal etc. are some of the various efforts made to improve quality of coal.

(d) Availability of new coal resources are established by Regional exploration carried out by Geological Survey of India (GSI). Apart from it, Promotional (Regional) Exploration is also carried out by Mineral Exploration Corporation Limited (MECL), Central Mines Planning and Design Institute Limited (CMPDIL) and GSI to identify new coal occurrences.

(e) and (f) No, Sir. Under the present laws coal mining including exploration can only be done by public sector companies-except for specified captive purposes.

VRS in BSNL and MTNL

†2408. SHRI ABU ASIM AZMI: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to introduce voluntary retirement scheme in Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd. and Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Ltd.,

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether it is a fact that MTNL had introduced voluntary retirement scheme for its employees working in its offices situated in Delhi and Mumbai;

(d) if so, present status thereof; and

(e) by when, Government would completely ban voluntary retirement scheme?

THE MINISTER OF .STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD): (a) to (d) Sir, there is no proposal for bringing out Voluntary Retirement Scheme (VRS) in Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited at present. However, in so far as MTNL is concerned, the VRS scheme framed has not been implemented so far.

(e) Presently there is no proposal to ban Voluntary Retirement Scheme.

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.